BECAUSE HE PRAYED

HE was a man of sixty years or so. His grizzled hair and beard and jovial face were a familiar sight in the chapel choir. He had not much voice to boast of, but, as he said, "with the lads all away, it's up to us old uns to do our bit"; and his only boy had been one of the best singers in the choir.

He was very well known to most of the congregation, for he interpreted his membership seriously, and he was friendly with all whom he met. Because he had one great talent, the art of talking naturally and unaffectedly and freely about the things of the soul, those who had boys at the front or far across the world were always glad to speak with him.

"Well," he would say after the services, "we've prayed for them again to-day, so we can carry an easy mind. The Lord will have them in his keeping." His simple words carried great comfort, for all knew how much his only son, who was at the front, meant to this man. Whenever anyone asked him what he heard from his son, he would reply with his brightest smile, "I have prayed for my boy morning, noon and night since we parted. I have no fear of what may happen. The Lord knows best."

The young minister was grateful for this good man's serene faith, which was a constant inspiration to the little community of souls. If he could not sing very well in the choir, he was himself a perpetual song of hope. But one morning the minister found himself faced by the task of breaking the news that death had claimed another only son.

The lad had been killed in action on the Somme.

With sinking heart the minister made his way to the good man's home. He held in his hand the letter from a chaplain who knew both the lad and the father. "Was there, perhaps, presumption and sin," he wondered, "in so strong and assertive a faith in prayer, that it should be visited with so cruel a reward?" He trembled for the effect of the news, not merely on the man but on the whole church.

He found the man at home. The same bright, happy faith was shining in his eyes, a brightness that did not flinch even at the sight of the sad, set features of the minister.

It was never unnatural, somehow, to mention Scripture to this man, and so he began, "Do you remember that beautiful verse in Romans that speaks about God giving up his only Son freely for us all?" Then quietly he spoke of the chaplain's letter and its contents.

For a moment the good man covered his eyes.

"I know how you have prayed," said the minister. "It is very hard."

Quickly the hand fell from the eyes; quickly those eyes searched the minister's face. "Sir," said the father, "you misunderstand. My heart is grieved because it will be so much longer till I see my boy again, but not because I doubt God's love. Because I prayed—just because I put him morning, noon and night in the Lord's hands—I know he can only have gone by the Lord's good will, and I am content. If I had not prayed, then indeed I might have felt that only man's wicked will had done this thing; but as it is"—he lifted his eyes to heaven—"'Thy will be done'!"

A wave of reverence and conviction poured into the minister's soul; he knew he had listened to a great prophetic word of God.

On the following Sunday the "man of faith" was in his usual place in the choir.

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